

KNOW YOUR PHONE

Have You Been Slammed?

Slamming is when **your chosen long-distance company is switched to another company without your consent or knowledge**. Slamming could affect your long distance services, and end up costing you more money.

Although interstate Slamming is against the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC's) Rules, from time to time, it does happen. If you fall victim to this practice, you have rights you need to be aware of.

If you have been slammed (your long distance service has been switched without your consent or knowledge), and you receive higher phone bills because of this practice, you have some protections. If your interstate service is slammed, you will only be required under FCC rules to pay the toll charges you would have paid to your preferred long distance company.

If your instate service is slammed, you should tell the company that switched your service (without your authorization) that you dispute the switch. You should also tell them that:

you will only pay the charges you would have paid to your preferred long distance company, and
you want to be switched back to your preferred carrier free of charge.

If you are unsuccessful in resolving your dispute directly with the carrier that switched your instate toll service, you should notify the Maine Public Utilities Commission. The PUC will open a consumer complaint and assist you with resolving your dispute. The PUC is currently developing procedures to protect consumers from instate long-distance slamming.

Long distance companies must obtain your authorization in order to switch your service. One method of authorization is a Letter of Agency (LOA). This indicates, in **writing, that you have agreed to be a** customer of a specific long distance company: Your long distance company can provide you with a form which you can sign. By signing such a form, your preferred carrier cannot be switched, unless you decide to make a change. This is also called a PIC Freeze.

Be aware of some, more confusing authorization forms, especially when they are combined with contest entries, prizes, even personal checks. Read the fine print on any offer!

Be aware of misleading marketing techniques that result in slamming: sweepstakes, checks made out to you from telephone companies, contests, or other gimmicks. If what you are hearing about or receiving in the mail seems too good to be true, it probably is. Remember, don't sign anything until you have read the fine print thoroughly.

If you have complaints about being slammed, you can write to:

Maine Public Utilities Commission
Consumer Assistance Division
State House Station 18
Augusta, ME 04333-0018

In Maine, you may call 1-800-452-4699 and a Consumer Specialist will assist you.

You may access our web page at: <http://www.state.me.us/mpuc/mtef.htm>

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